

October 2011 State Employee of the Month

Eric Norem – Department of Mental Health

As a Security Officer I with the Dept. of Mental Health's Southeast Mental Health Center in Farmington, Eric Norem works to provide security and protection of property in state owned and leased facilities. No matter the problem Eric strives to resolve the issue in an efficient and timely manner.

In addition to his regular assigned duties, Eric took it upon himself to create a tool that would minimize, if not eliminate, frustration among his co-workers related to assignment sheets. Nursing staff assignment sheets are simple in purpose, but complex in filling out when a number of variables are to be accounted for on the sheet. These items include such things as: number of staff assigned; number of one-on-one situations, ward tasks, program assignments, breaks and lunches, etc. Eric noted that at times nurses were taking 10 to 15 minutes to complete this task when one-on-one situations were present.

Mr. Norem was able to logically program all variables into a spreadsheet format so that the nurse completing the form to only enter the names of staff for a particular shift. The spreadsheet then assigns the staff to all the variables listed, evenly and fairly distributing the workload among all staff assigned. Additionally, Eric was able to program other worksheets that input all pertinent patient data and leaving space for staff observation for eventual use in generating the shift and subsequent 24-hour report.

Since implementation nurses have reported that a shift assignment sheet is now only taking two to three minutes to complete, with the majority of this time spent logging on and off of the computer. If log in time is discounted, the form can be pulled up, staff names entered and printed in approximately 30 seconds; yielding a staffing assignment sheet that is accurately and fairly created. Additionally this has created a conservative estimate of an annual saving by using this tool of \$23,000. Nursing Staff have made the following comments:

- “The new staffing assignment sheets have made my life way easier. Eric is excellent with his computer skills and is always looking for innovative ways to improve the function of the wards. We all greatly appreciate the time he has taken to create these assignment sheets.”
- “At first I was resistive to the new program. But now I see how it has made it fairer in doing the assignments. I was used to doing it the old way, but the new ways makes life much easier.”
- “It is much faster and more user friendly. The computer printout is already on a rotating schedule for every day of the week.”